

It started with shirts walking in the 4th of July parade in Bethany. It continued the following week during Vacation Bible School. Finally our school chose this as its theme for the year. Team Jesus! It's hard to miss that color and image, bright yellow shirts with Team Jesus in blue and red on the front. Bright yellow banners that walked in the parade and now hang from the ceiling in the school hallway. Bright colors and bold name declare who we are, we are Team Jesus.

In the world you wouldn't necessarily know who is on Team Jesus. Unfortunately there aren't always bright yellow shirts. But that doesn't mean they aren't out there. There are even people we think are Christians, but then they do some not so very Christian things. We want to stop them and say, "Quit doing Christian things if you're not Christian." It gives Team Jesus a bad name, it leads Christians to doubt and sin, and finally it can lead us to doubt and sin.

The disciple John encountered someone just like that. This man was doing things Jesus wanted his disciples doing, but the man wasn't a disciple. So John stopped him. And what do we do if we encounter people who we think aren't Team Jesus but they're doing things we're doing? Jesus answers that question with this section recorded in the gospel...

**Those with us are for Jesus
Keeping me and others from sin
Being in the Word of God at peace**

Even though the school's theme for the year is Team Jesus with the bright yellow shirts, the uniform they wear four days a week is not. It's dark blue with white logos of the school and a small orange cross on the back. It's really easy to see when someone is not wearing their uniform. For John it seemed easy to spot this man, like he wasn't wearing the disciple uniform. John looked to Jesus for clarification. **"Teacher, we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."** Remember these disciples had just been rebuked for arguing about who was the greatest. They were wrong here too.

Jesus wanted the disciples to know that even though the man wasn't one of their tight circles, he was still one of them. He was a follower of Christ sharing in the all important work of sharing Christ's name. Not every follower of Jesus had to be a disciple. Even doing the little things has people included with Jesus. **"I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."** There was no way this man could do a miracle like driving out demons and then be against Christ.

There was also a warning from Jesus. Team Jesus watches out for each other. A member of Team Jesus would not lead someone else into sin. **"If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck."** Little ones refer not only to children, but believers in Christ. Millstone around the neck in the sea means death; and not a nice death. Dying that way would be better than being punished by God for causing a believer to sin. That's how serious Jesus is about sin. Drastic measures are called for when members of Team Jesus are in danger of sin.

So a friend who constantly pressures you to get involved in things that are clearly against God's will is no friend of yours or Jesus. That person is against you and against Jesus. Material goods in your life can be a temptation to sin. That makes them against you and against Jesus. Or you might be the one doing the tempting of someone else. Then you would be against Jesus. Those not on Team Jesus, those leading others to sin face serious consequences. **"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out."** If Jesus is serious about you losing body parts because of sin, he certainly is serious about the drastic measures needed to remove sin and temptation from around you and others. Friends might have to go, material goods might have to go, even you might have to go.

Jesus said, **"Whoever is not against us is for us."** Those on Team Jesus don't get that way by themselves. No one here this morning did it themselves. The man driving out demons did that in the name of Jesus. How does that name have such power? Included in Jesus' name is everything he did and everything he said to save you. When Jesus' name is mentioned that's the gospel. We hold onto Jesus' name for hope against temptation in our lives. Jesus' name is our forgiveness from times when friends led us into sin or we led others into sin. Why do we say we're on Team Jesus? Because in that name is hope for heaven, hope for sins forgiven, and the promise that something better is waiting for us beyond this world. Now let's act like we're members of Team Jesus, let's act like we're with him. Let's work to keep ourselves and others away from sin by returning to Christ's name each and every day.

Being part of a team you naturally watch out for everyone on the team. The disciples didn't realize that the man they stopped was really on their side. They should have encouraged him, not stopped him. But Jesus showed them that people working with them would be working for the same goals. That goal was Jesus' goal, to save souls and keep people from sin. When people on Team Jesus work together for that goal, when they get into the Word of God together, then they can exist at peace with each other.

Jesus picks up a familiar picture, one of salt. The first time he described Christians saying, **"You are the salt of the earth."** Believers live and move in this world among unbelievers. As they do they preserve the world and offer a gospel seasoning to those they encounter. The idea here is slightly different. Here the salt Jesus talks about is not the people but is in people. Salt still preserves, still seasons. This salt will make people at peace. It will be seen in people by their allegiance to Christ and their allegiance to the gospel. That can only happen in one place. The salt here is the Word of God.

The Word of God makes people at peace with each other. Through it believers know they have the same mission under Christ. Believers don't need to go after greatness. Little things done in Jesus' name are important in Christ's kingdom. That kind of salt though needs to remain sharp and salty in us. **Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?** A member of Team Jesus who loses contact with the salt of the Bible loses their saltiness. Getting it back isn't easy. There are no substitutes.

If Team Jesus Christians are vying for the top spot in an organization or church there won't be peace. If each feels their solution is best to a problem and no one listens or compromises there won't be peace. And if people are judging others or looking down on their actions there won't be peace. It might lead to questions of who is really part of Team Jesus. That will always cause a lack of peace. All the lack of peace can be traced back to a lack of contact with the salt, the Word of God. Our ability to exist at peace is cut down when we lose saltiness by losing contact with the Word of God. Sin like this comes easier when there's no salt in us.

Jesus promises the only place we maintain our saltiness is in the Word of God. The only place we maintain the peace we have among Christians is through the Word of God. In the Word of God is where we find Jesus. It's no surprise that Jesus would turn us back there. He wants us turned back to the message about him. He wants us to know that we only live at peace with those believers around us because of the peace that he won for us by his death on the cross.

Now continue to remain salty and exist at peace with each other. Be in the Word of God. Find ways to get it into your daily habits. Understand that everyone here is working for the same goals. Don't seek to put yourself or your ideas and thoughts ahead of others. Rather, work together with the Word of God as your guide and the message of Jesus as your motivation. Be at peace in Christ and seek to share that peace of Christ with others.

I would love if we could print up a whole mess of bright yellow Team Jesus shirts and give one to everyone here and to anyone in the world that was also a believer in Christ. Wouldn't that look cool, all believers wearing their faith in bright yellow? But that's not how we identify believers. Those that are with Christ aren't going to be against him. So they will be keeping themselves and others from sinning and they will be in the Word of God to stay at peace with each other. By these actions we know who is with us and therefore who is with Christ.